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THE WASHINGTON HAJJI BABA

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The idea for an organization, in Washington, D. C., of people interested in Oriental rugs originated in the summer of 1962 when members of the New York Hajji Baba Club held an exhibition at the Textile Museum of rugs drawn from their collections. Interest in this project was further stimulated when an exhibition from the collections of Arthur D. Jenkins and H. McCoy Jones was shown at the Textile Museum in 1963. At that time, it was found that six Washington, and several elsewhere located, members of the New York Hajji Baba Club, were anxious to establish a rug oriented club in the District of Columbia area. At an open discussion of the proposed club during a picnic held by the New York Hajji Babas in the summer of 1963, it was the concensus that if twenty-five seriously interested persons could be organized, the establishment of a rug society in Washington would be a worthwhile undertaking. By July 1964 this objective was accomplished and the first meeting of the new society took place in the Textile Museum in December 1964. Since then, regular meetings designed to increase knowledge and appreciation of rugs have been held, often with distinguished speakers invited to discuss their fields of prominence.

The Rug Society of Washington, D. C. was incorporated on September 6, 1965, as a tax-free, educational corporation (and is an independent organization associated with the Textile Museum) with the following objectives:

1. To promote the public interest in Oriental rugs.
2. To hold meetings that would further interest and increase knowledge in the rug field.
3. To supply qualified speakers on rugs for schools and other organizations both in and out of Washington.
4. To create a better understanding with the people of the rug making countries.
5. To support the activities of the Textile Museum.

With these objectives, the Rug Society has been successful in securing local and non-resident members, and has been growing steadily, with a current membership of eighty persons. Its activities consist of eight lively meetings a year, as well as special events. One of the meetings is a Christmas reception for an honored guest, two others are picnics at

Members of the Hajji Baba Club at a meeting in the Textile Museum

H. McCoy Jones and Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Cummings at a Hajji Baba Club reception in the Textile Museum gardens

which members bring their own rugs for open discussion. In October 1965, on the eve of the opening of the exhibition of the outstanding rug collection of Mr. Joseph V. McMullan at the Textile Museum, the Society sponsored a testimonial dinner at the Army and Navy Club in his honor. An exhibition of Afghan and related rugs was arranged and installed by members of the Society at the Smithsonian Institution in the summer of 1966. Among the many favorable comments on this exhibition was one from the Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East and Southeastern Asia who praised the exhibit's international good-will aspect. A scholarship for a summer course in conservation was jointly sponsored by the Society and the Textile Museum (Spring 1966) and was awarded to Richard Drake, a student at Gallaudet College.

Early in 1966 the Hajji Baba Club of New York took favorable action on the Washington Rug Society becoming associated with their distinguished group and the name of Washington Hajji Baba was jointly approved.

The schedule of events for 1967-68 is very interesting. In September 1967, a sunset picnic was held in the lovely garden of Mr. Fred Kramer's town house. In October, Mr. Milton Sonday, Assistant Curator of Rugs at the Textile Museum, talked on the East of Turkestan Exhibition at the Museum. In November, Mr. Joseph V. McMullan, an outstanding scholar in the field, spoke on Turkish rugs. The annual Christmas reception was held at the Arts Club in December 1967. Planned for 1968 are meetings in January, February, March, and an April picnic (speakers to be announced). In May 1968, a joint meeting of the Washington and New York Hajji Babas will be held in Washington.

The Wahington Hajji Baba is planning an important event in the rug world by preparing a major exhibition of Turkish rugs to be held at the Textile Museum from May 28 through September 1968. Exhibited will be rugs of the members of the Washington Hajji Baba, supplemented by the Textile Museum's collection, Dumbarton Oaks, and others.

The Washington Hajji Baba is justifiably proud of its growth, and of its accomplishments in reviving interest and increasing knowledge of Oriental rugs during its short existence. The president wishes to thank the members for their keen interest and active cooperation in activities of the Washington Hajji Baba. He also wishes to express the pleasure the members have had in their association with Director Alan Sawyer and his fine staff at the Textile Museum.